1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

Tiklauila" or "My wife is a Munupula woman"; a mourner would say, "He died when visiting the Munupula and therefore we will have to go to Munupi for the funeral"; an old man would reminisce about being brought up as a youth by his mother's brother, who was a Turupula, and the good times he had in Turupi; and another would recount details of big battles between the Munupula and the Malauila. All of these were band names or band territories. The nine bands thus acted, psychologically, as small tribelets or semisovereign groups, since it was with one of them that every Tiwi most closely identified in his day-to-day life on the islands. It is only when, as nowadays, he leaves the islands to go to work for the white man in Darwin that he has to think of himself as a Tiwi, since there he mingles with men of other tribes. Even then, work and residence in the white man's town does not entirely obliterate band identification. A Tiklauila in Darwin prefers to work with and to consort in the evenings with other Tiklauila, and Malauila with Malauila.[8]

Because of certain peculiar features of Tiwi domestic life, to be discussed below, it is difficult to sum up the Tiwi band in any simple formula. People, especially women, changed their band residence frequently in the course of their lives, and being born into a band did not at all require permanent residence with that band, either for males or for females. Thus the district (for example, Tiklaru or Malau) was a firm, fixed, known quantity, but the people who "owned" the district (for example, Tiklauila or Malauila) were a flexible and constantly shifting collection of individuals.

The territorial boundaries between bands were clear and well known to everybody, though they were not the sharp lines on a map such as we regard as essential for a frontier or a land boundary. All pieces of country—clumps of jungle, stretches of grassland, sections of thick woods—had names. One such piece of country, say a thickly wooded area, belonged to one band, while the more open country that began where the woods thinned out belonged to another; thus the boundary was not a sharp line but a transitional zone—perhaps of several miles—where the change from trees to open savannah became noticeable, with the band territories thus fusing into one another rather than being separated by sharp lines. The Tiwi, so to speak, thought of the landscape as a sort of spectrum where a man moved gradually out of one district into another as he passed from one type of horizon to the next. Since rivers, and even Apsley Strait, a very narrow arm of the sea separating Melville from Bathurst Island, usually have similar types of vegetation on *both* sides or banks, none of the island rivers nor Apsley Strait was a boundary or frontier between bands. The Mandiimbula, predominantly a Melville Island

[8] In the early 1930's the situation at the Government Hospital in Darwin offered a good illustration of this. The hospital authorities said they gave preference for houseboy jobs to "Melville Islanders because of their greater intelligence and reliability." In point of fact, some of the younger Tiklauila had established a monopoly on hospital jobs and no Tiwi other than a Tiklauila was ever hired there. The whites thought they were hiring Tiwi but the Tiklauila saw to it that they hired only Tiklauila and felt no vestige of obligation to other Tiwi to help them get these desirable jobs. The alleged greater intelligence of the islanders was undoubtedly due to the fact that the Tiklauila, having had a Catholic mission in their territory since 1911, were more used to white requirements.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

INTRODUCTION

MELVILLE ISLAND (Fig. 1), the research field of the 1954 National Geographic expedition, is, with the exception of Tasmania, the largest of the Australian islands. Eighty miles from east to west, and seventy from north to south, it rises barely five hundred feet above the sea. Its level surface is covered with a monotonous grey-green forest of eucalypts and acacias, whose monotony is broken only by the steep cliffs and sandy beaches of the coastline, the salt-water creeks which cut deeply into the northern coasts, and the almost impenetrable mangrove swamps that line those waterways.

Between Melville Island and the mainland are the swiftly running tideways, the reefs and shoals of the Clarence and Dundas Straits, tideways so dangerous that, before the installation of a series of flashing light-buoys, no ocean-going ship would attempt to navigate their broken waters in the darkness.

Abel Tasman, in 1644, was the first European to sail along the east, north, and west coasts of Melville Island and the adjacent Bathurst Island,[1] naming Cape Van Diemen and Van Diemen Gulf after the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. As Tasman's account of that journey was lost, we do not know whether he actually landed on the islands, or only saw them in the distance.

Sir Philip King circumnavigated the two islands in 1818 and in 1824 the British Government, both to prevent the French from settling along the northern coasts of Australia and to protect British commerce from the rapidly expanding Dutch trade, established a military post at Fort Dundas, on the Apsley Straits. After five unhappy years the authorities moved the garrison to Port Essington, on the Coburg Peninsula, on the mainland, but not before both Sir Gordon Bremer (12th Nov. 1824) and Major Campbell (1834, pp. 135–60) had made some excellent observations on aboriginal graves, burial poles, bark paintings and canoes.

In the early days of this century, a buffalo hunter, Joe C. Cooper, having gained the confidence of the warlike people of Melville Island, known as the Tiwi tribe, established a camp near Cockle Point (Fig. 1) on the south-western corner of Melville Island. There he earned a living shooting buffaloes for their hides, buffaloes whose forbears had escaped from the settlement at Fort Dundas.

[1] Melville and Bathurst Islands, separated by the narrow Apsley Straits, are both a geographic and cultural unit.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958

OI20 Tiwi OI20

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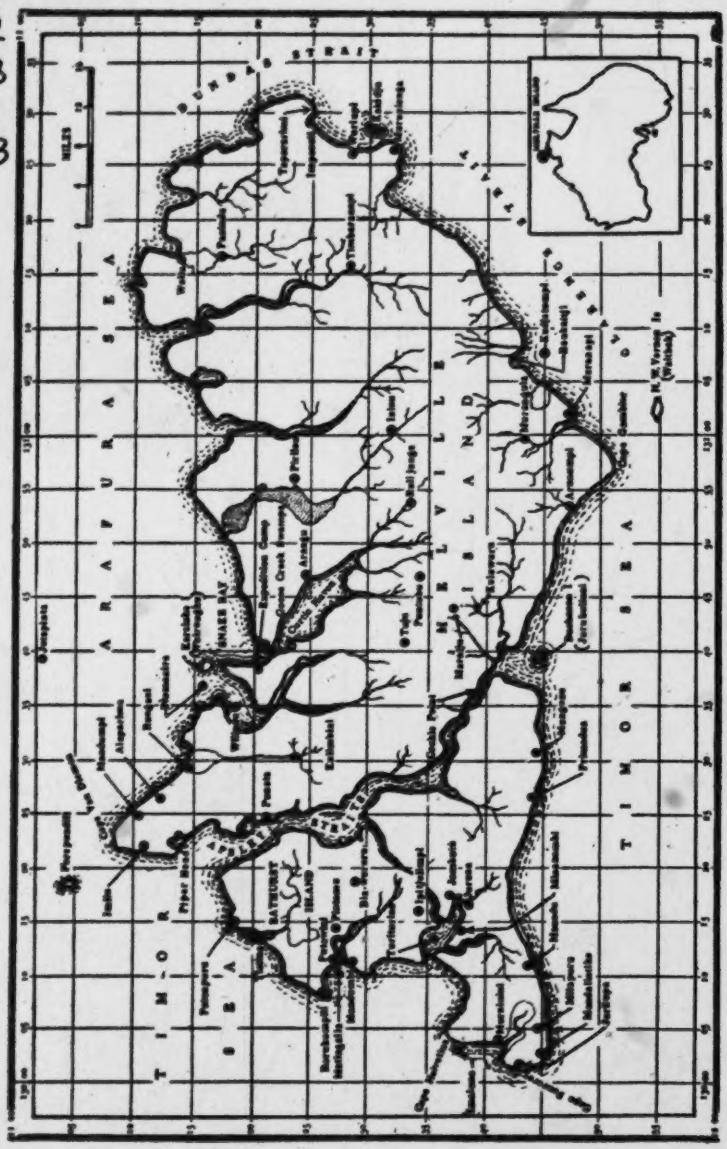

FIG. 1. *Tourist Map of Melville and Bathurst Islands*

[p. 14]

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

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mangrove creeks in which the crocodiles live. The red, yellow and white bands, *h*, *h*, etc., are boulders of various colours on the beach, and the dotted diamond shapes, on *m*, *m*, *m*, the pattern which the turtle-woman, *Garagulani*, painted on her bark basket at *Purukupali*'s ceremony, and which, when she changed herself into a turtle, became the shell design on her carapace (p. 39).

The pole shapes of Pl. 34B are: the projections, *f*, the fork of a tree, the bosses, *a*, *a*, breasts of women and the three cylindrical sections, rocks on the sea-coast.

The painted designs at *a*, *a*, are, as before, women's breasts, and the radiating designs and central dot on the bosses, the eyes of women. The vertical bands, such as *d*, etc., on the two upper cylindrical sections, and the horizontal bands, *e*, etc., on the lower section, are women's trade belts, the discs on the upper and lower sections, silver coins, and the dots on the background, stars in the sky.

The pole shapes of Pl. 35A, B, are: the two forked projections, *a*, *a*, the throwing sticks used by the moon-man, *Tjapara*, in his fight against *Purukupali*; the rectangular opening immediately below, is a window, and the lower section, a large boulder.

The painted decorations on the pole (Pl. 35A, B), are, by far, the most elaborate and best executed I have examined. On the upper section, the diagonal and transverse red and white lines, *b*, symbolise the native roads near Imilu, north-western Melville Island, the source of the red ochre so valued by the Melville Islanders; the cone-shaped figures, *d*, outcrops of red and white rocks, and the bands, *c*, *c*, grass on the top of the cliffs at Imilu.

The many designs on the lower section illustrate, in detail, the topography at Imilu. On Fig. 9, the key to Pl. 35A, B, these designs are arranged in topographical levels.[1]

Level 1, pictures the highlands; 2, the jungle at the top of the cliffs; 3, an aboriginal road; 4, the trees on the sea-coast; 5, the surface of the sea; 6, the creatures in the sea, and 7, the waves breaking on the sea-shore.

On level 1, *g*, *g*, *g*, represent the eucalypts of the highlands and on level 2, *j*, *j*, etc., the jungle trees which grow along the edge of the cliff. At *y*, is a

[133]

[1] Brown (1905, p. 28), writing about the appearance of these cliffs, when viewed from the sea, states, "... they often appear thus: four parallel lines—top of timber, top of cliff, top of beach, edge of water; the first, green, the second, red, the third, white, greyish-blue water in front and blue sky above." Brown and *Pulaimbuwi*, the artist of the pole, were both impressed with the same parallel lines of colour, which extend for miles along the shore of Cape Van Diemen.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

CHAPTER VI

The Secular Bark Paintings

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THE designs used by the Tiwi on many of their secular bark paintings are strongly influenced by those employed in decorating the poles and the large bark baskets of the *pukamuni* ceremony. For instance, all of the patterns on Pl. 49 would be similar to those used on a burial pole, while a number of the paintings of the totemic places, for example, those shown on Pl. 10, have the same fundamental designs as those on the *pukamuni* baskets.

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As mentioned previously, one of the remarkable aspects of the art of the Tiwi is that it is highly formalized, whereas, on the mainland, only fourteen miles away, across the dangerous waterway of Dundas Strait, the art is fully representational. This difference in the art forms of the Tiwi and that of the aborigines of the adjacent mainland is an excellent example of how a natural barrier can isolate one culture from the influence of another.

1. TOPOGRAPHY

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The obverse side of a large *pukamuni* basket (Pl. 49A, B), illustrates the trees and shrubs of Cape Van Diemen, arranged in a decorative pattern, and on the reverse side (Pl. 49C, D), the natural features at Imilu, in the same locality.

Cape Van Diemen

On Pl. 49A, B, the series of rectangles at *a*, on the top of the basket, represent a forest of stringybark trees, and the groups of vertical and sloping lines at *k*, *k* (bottom), many bloodwood trees. The vertical lines, *f*, *f*, etc., are also stringybarks and the horizontal lines, *e*, *e*, etc., bloodwood trees.

The many circles, *d*, *d*, etc., are *pukamuni* arm ornaments, *palmajinas* (Pl. 31E, F); the cross-hatching in rectangles *c*, *c*, etc. (upper) are spider webs, and the dots at *b*, *b*, etc., black and red seeds of a jungle vine lying on the ground.

Imilu

On Pl. 49C, D, the circles *a*, *a*, etc., in the border, represent the many hives of wild bees in the trees at Imilu, and the intervening panels, *f*, *f*, etc., red

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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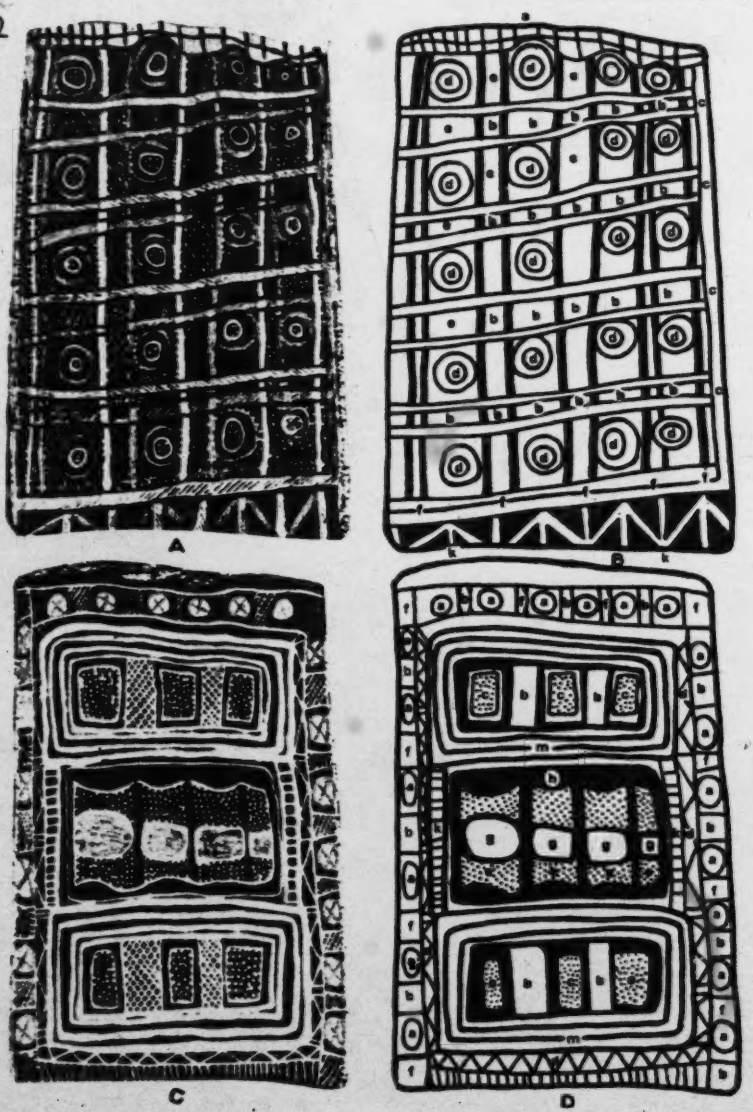

PLATE 49. *Secular Bark Paintings*
A, B, Topography, Cape Van Diemen; C, D, Topography, Imilu.

[p. 160A]

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958

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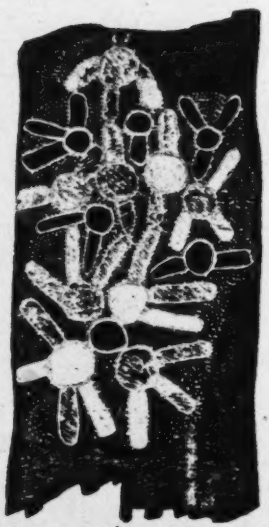

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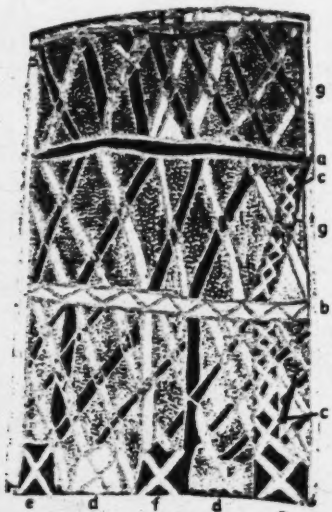

B

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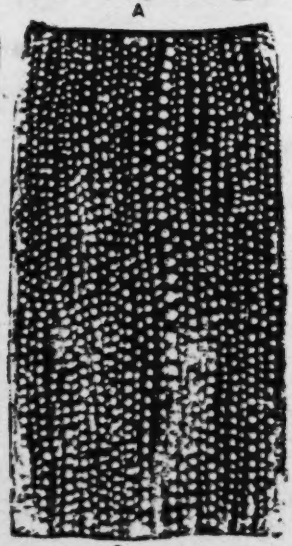

C

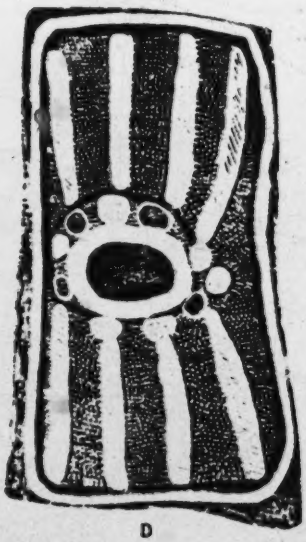

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PLATE 50. *Secular Bark Paintings*

A, Sea-floor; B, Mangrove Swamp; C, Fish-man, Kumunga; D, Topography, Bathurst Island.

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OI20 Tiwi OI20

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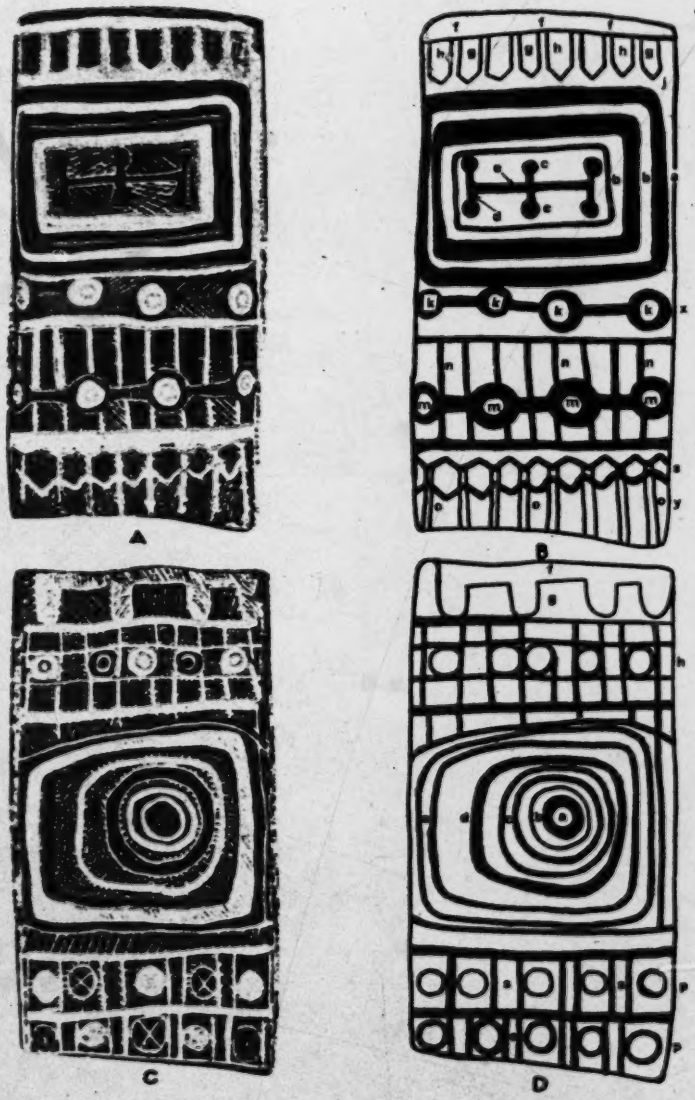

PLATE 51. *Secular Bark Paintings*
A, B, Topography, Garden Point; C, D, Topography, Snake Bay.

[p. 160 C]

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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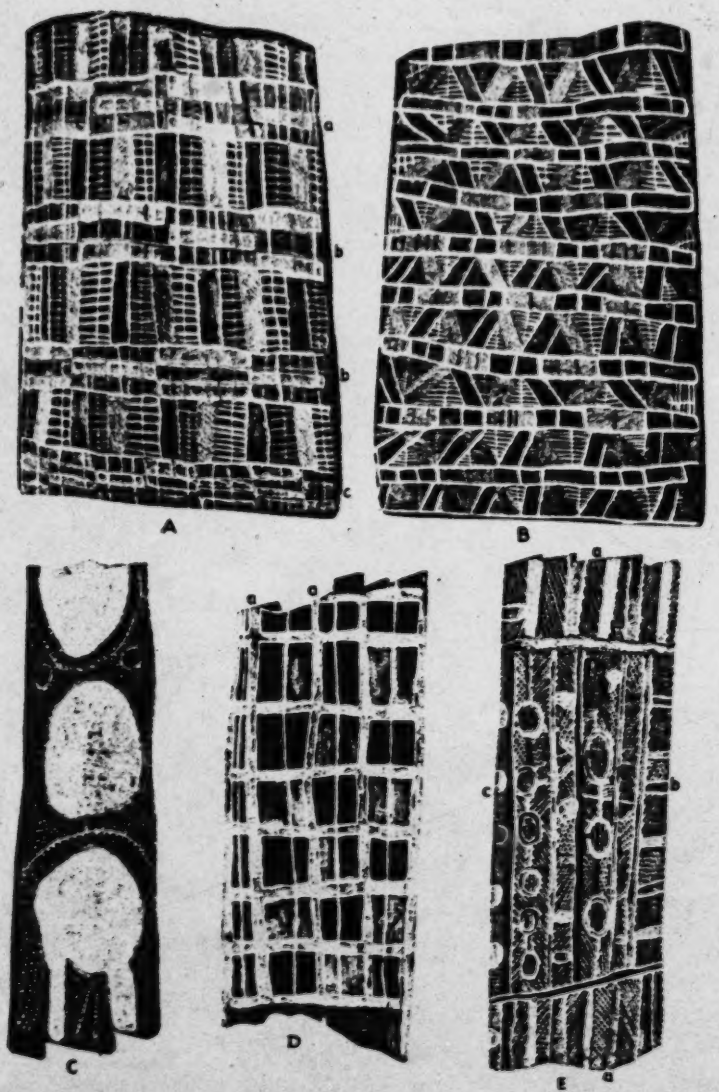

PLATE 52. *Secular Bark Paintings*
A, B, Sea-coast, Cape Van Diemen; C, Lagoons and Swamps; D, The Sea-shore; E, Jungle Scene.

[p. 160 D]

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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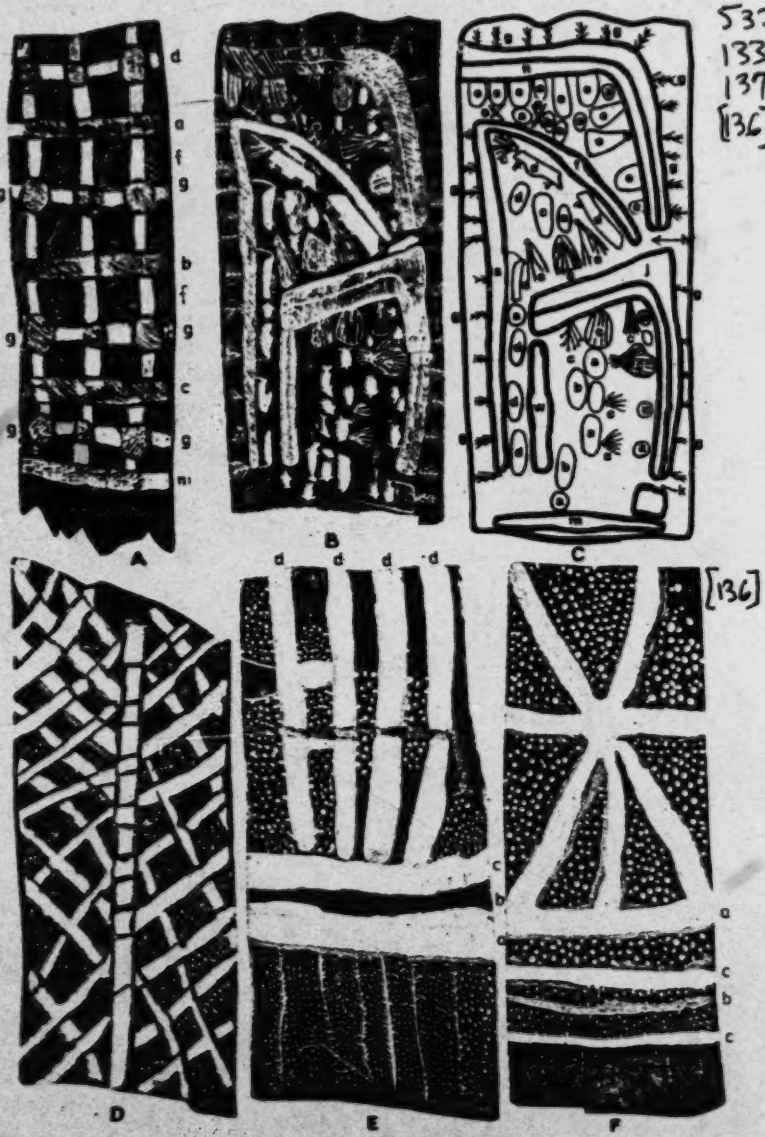

PLATE 53. *Secular Bark Paintings*
A, Forest, Curtis Haven; B, C, Topography, Snake Bay; D, Fresh and Salt-water Streams; E, Topography, Goose Creek; F, Sea-scape.

[p. 160 E]

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

and black seeds. The dotted rectangles, *c*, *c*, at the top and bottom of the paintings are lily-covered lagoons (dots represent the blossoms); the cross-hatched panels, *b*, *b*, etc., between them are spider webs in the trees and the meandering lines, *d*, *d*, etc., along the outer edge, a jungle vine hanging from the branches of the trees. The black design *h*, in the middle of the painting, is the beach at Imilu; the irregular circles, *g*, *g*, etc., are large rocks on the shore, and the dots, the eucalyptus trees that grow along the top of the cliff. The series of large rectangles, *m*, *m* (top and bottom) indicate the sandy shores of the lagoons, and the short vertical lines at *k* (bottom), a forest of eucalypts.

A large *pukamani* basket, Pl. 51A, B, C, D, pictures (*a*) Pl. 51A, B, the topography near the mission station at Garden Point, near Punata (Fig. 1), and (b) Pl. 51C, D, the surroundings near the expedition camp.

Punata (Garden Point)

The series of rectangles on the obverse side of the basket (Pl. 51A, B), represent a house at Garden Island mission. At *a*, are the foundations; *b*, *b*, the walls; *c*, *c*, the upright posts of the house; *d*, the beams of the roof, and at *e*, is the ridge pole.

At *f*, *f*, etc., on the upper edge, are the tall eucalyptus trees of the surrounding forest. At *j*, is the red ground on which the trees grow; at *g*, the dots are black and red seeds on the ground, and at *h*, the cross-hatching is the spider-webs in the trees.

At the bottom of the painting, *n*, *n*, etc., and *o*, *o*, etc., are more large eucalyptus trees. Symbols *k*, *k*, etc., and *m*, *m*, etc., represent hives of wild honey in the trees; the meandering lines at *s*, are jungle vines hanging from the branches; the cross-hatched areas are spider webs among the leaves, and the dots, as before, red and black seeds on the ground.

Snake Bay

The central black circle, *a*, on the reverse side of the basket, Pl. 51C, D, is a black rock in the sea, and the circle, *b*, immediately surrounding it, the broken water at its base, while circle *c*, indicates large rocks at the bottom of the cliffs, the white outer rectangle, *e*, being the sea-sand and the rectangle, *d*, the waves breaking on them. The white dots are the pebbles on the shore.

The upper and lower panels of the painting deal with the land. The white design *f*, on the upper edge, is a forest of large eucalyptus trees, and the cross-hatching, *g*, spider-webs on their branches. The five circles at *h*, are hives

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
O120 Tiwi O120

X532 of wild honey in the hollow trees, and the dots, the red and black seeds of a
● 133 jungle vine.
137 On the lower panel, *s*, *s*, etc., indicate another forest of eucalyptus trees; the two rows of five circles at *p*, *p*, hives of wild bees, the cross-hatched panels between them spider webs, and the dots, the red and black seeds.

Biru Creek

Pl. 53E refers to a water-course, Biru, near the Goose Creek swamps, which is fresh in the southern and salt in the northern section, where it enters the sea.

The white panel *a*, is the saltwater end of Biru Creek, which is near the entrance of the Goose Creek swamps (Fig. 1), and the white band *c*, the freshwater end of the same creek. The black band *b*, is its banks. Panels *d*, *d*, etc., are white patches of sand and the dots, on the upper panel, patches of water-grass on the floor of the swamp. The bottom panel represents the open sea, the dots indicating patches of seaweed on the bottom.

Snake Bay

Pl. 53B, C, deals with the topography of Snake Bay.

Karslake Island (Wulrungku) is shown at *m*, on the lower edge; a sandbar (upper), the home of the spirit dogs, the *Wankuis* (p. 154) is at *f*; Iluwara inlet, in the Curtis Haven, is at *h* (middle right); a beach on the opposite shore of Iluwara inlet is at *j*, and Tjipripu Point at *w* (lower left). The long vertical line *s*, on the left, is Banjo beach, on which we camped; and *k* (lower right), a mangrove creek to the east.

Designs *e*, *e*, etc. (upper right), are mangrove trees growing on Karslake Island, and crosses, *o*, *o* (upper left), dead trees on the shore. Basket sponges, growing on rocks at the sea-bottom, are indicated at *c*, *c*, etc. (centre).
[136] Turtles are at *a*, *a*, etc.; dugongs at *b*, *b*, etc., and canoes at *d*, *d*, etc. Many casuarina trees, *g*, *g*, etc., grow along the shore lines.

Lagoons and Swamps

This simple bark painting, Pl. 52C, pictures the lagoons at the rear of the expedition camp.

The upper white semi-circle is the swamp, immediately behind our camp, in which there are many paper-bark trees (*Melaleuca* sp.); the white dots are water-lilies growing in the swamp. The central white oval indicates an open lagoon from which the water runs into the sea.

The lower design indicates a swamp further inland, which is fed by two

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

freshwater streams (projections on the lower edge). The dots around this design are also water-lilies. 532x 133 137

Western Bathurst Island

Pl. 50D illustrates a hill, Ipitjulimpi, on western Bathurst Island.

The central black oval is Ipitjulimpi Hill, and the white outline, the tall annual grass which grows at its base. The circle of small discs are groups of boulders on the sides of the hill. The eight long ovals on the upper and lower sections of the paintings, are cabbage palms; the white outer border symbolizes red cliffs near by, and, the dots, the grass on the hillside.

2. THE SEA AND THE SWAMP-LANDS

The Sea and Sea-shore

Three bark paintings, Pl. 54C, Pl. 53F, and Pl. 52D, deal with the sea and the sea-shore.

Pl. 54C refers to the sea and the sea-coast. The outer plain vertical panels symbolize the white sand on the sea-shore, and the outer black panels, batches of sea-weed. The light-coloured ovals are rocks under the water, covered with the sea-weed, and the black ovals are reefs of dark-coloured rocks on the bottom, which shelter the parrot fish and the rock cod. The cross-hatching indicates the white sand on the bottom of the ocean.

Pl. 53F depicts in a simple manner, the sea and the beach.

The intersecting lines on the upper panel represent an octopus, the dots, throughout the painting, small stones on the floor of the ocean; *a*, indicates the waves breaking on the beach; *b*, is a salt-water creek, and *c*, *c*, are its banks. [136]

Pl. 52D is a bark painting of the sea. The horizontal bars symbolize the waves breaking on the beach; the black rectangles, the dark-coloured stones, and the lighter-coloured rectangles, the red stones exposed at low water. The five vertical bands such as *a*, *a*, indicate the lines of debris, left by the retreating tide.

The Ocean Floor

Pl. 50A pictures the floor of the ocean. The light and dark coloured discs throughout the painting are boulders on the bottom, black projections on the dark-coloured discs, pearl-shell oysters, and those on the lighter discs, star-fish. The dots indicate the sea-sand. [136]

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

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A Salt-water Creek

Pl. 53D pictures a salt-water creek, Tunangabupi, which flows into the sea at north-eastern Melville Island.

The central panel is the Tunangabupi creek, the rectangles along it alternately representing sandbanks and outcrops of rocks in its bed. The lines forming the diamond patterns, indicate a series of freshwater streams which flow into the Tunangabupi Creek, and the white dots, the shrubs growing on their banks.

A Mangrove Swamp

Pl. 50B depicts a mangrove swamp at Cape Fourcroy.

Transverse band *a*, is a dry creek bed whose waters run into the swamp during the wet season, and *b*, a salt-water creek among the mangroves. The lines of diamond-like patterns at *c*, *c*, indicate a muddy salt-water creek, and the crossed designs *d*, *d*, muddy patches among the trees. At *e*, *e*, are fallen trees with mud on their roots, and *f*, is a large tree with its roots exposed. The intersecting lines in panels, *g*, *g*, indicate a forest of mangrove trees, and the dotted background, edible mangrove fruit lying on the ground.

The Sea-coast at Cape Van Diemen

Both sides of a large *pukamuni* basket, Pl. 52A and Pl. 52B, picture the sea-coast adjacent to Imilu, at Cape Van Diemen, north-western Melville Island.

The horizontal lines, *a*, on Pl. 52A, the obverse side of the basket, indicate the grass and fallen leaves on the sea-shore; the two bands, *b*, *b*, represent the sharp eroded rocks on the water's edge, and the lower band, *c*, weeds growing on the rocks under the water.

[136] Throughout the design, the darker-coloured barred rectangles, with white lines, are black trepang, and those with grey lines, white trepang. The plain rectangles indicate the sandy bed of the ocean.

On Pl. 52B, the reverse side of the same *pukamuni* basket, the series of transverse bands picture flat rocks on the edge of the sea, and the barred triangles, the water surging through them. The high cliffs at Imilu, Cape Van Dieman, are indicated by the many v-shaped designs.

The Sea and Mangrove Creeks

Pl. 54B is a particularly simple design which the artist once used to decorate a *pukamuni* pole.

The plain panels at the top and bottom of the paintings, represent the open sea; the transverse panels, *a*, *c*, *e*, *g*, *j*, refer to the salt-water creeks in the man-

3: Hart E-5 (1928-1929) 1930 OI20 Tiwi OI20

not only in physique but also in intelligence. I should be surprised to find in any other Australian tribe a man with the intelligence and adaptability of my own head boy Mariano.

The flora and fauna of the two islands is very similar to that of the rest of the Northern Territory. The country is mostly flat with a low range of rocky hills between Cape Gambier and Cape Keith on Melville Island, and a still lower range in the centre of Bathurst. The timber consists of the usual Australian trees; gums, stringy-bark, woolly-butt, bloodwood and ironwood cover most of the two islands, broken here and there by patches of open grassland and in other places by dense patches of jungle where snakes and "devils" thrive and the natives seldom enter. Wallabies are extraordinarily plentiful, but there are no kangaroos. Buffaloes are found on Melville in small numbers. These are the wild descendants of the domestic Indian buffaloes imported for agricultural purposes by the early settlers at Fort Dundas. At one time they had increased and multiplied to such effect that thousands were shot every year without any appreciable effect upon their numbers. At the present time, however, probably owing to many of the cows being killed, there are probably not more than a thousand on the island. The natives are seldom able to kill a buffalo though they realise the fact that it is good to eat.

Not only are wallabies plentiful, but there is also an abundant supply of the other native articles of food, fish, crocodile, birds of all kinds, wild honey, yams and other native vegetables. As a result of this abundance of foods, it would seem that the two islands had a greater density of population than is to be found in almost any other part of Australia.

LOCAL ORGANIZATION

The people inhabiting Melville and Bathurst Islands are subdivided into a number of local groups. These local groups are the important sections of the population since they act as land-owning groups, war-making groups, have a solidarity of their own which is far stronger than any tribal solidarity that may exist and even to some extent regulate marriage.

Before considering these hordes in detail, however, something must be said about the tribal name. All the hordes practise the same customs, speak the same language and inter-marry. The boundaries of the people speaking this language are of course strictly defined by the sea. In other words, the people of Melville and Bathurst have a solidarity of their own,

5: Basedow D-5 (1911)1913 OI20 Tiwi OI20

of the designs being very pleasing to the eye. Some spears, moreover, have human hair strings wound round the shaft, immediately below the head, for a distance of 10 centimetres or more, and this is kept in place with beeswax.

Canoes.

Elsewhere I have referred to the marked absence among the northern Australian tribes of anything but the most primitive crafts and such innovated forms as have resulted from the contact with the white and yellow races. They are, therefore, not to be considered as truly indigenous canoes. On Bathurst Island, however, conditions are different; due, perhaps, in the first place, to its insularity (as well as the numerous estuaries and rivers that cross the land), and, secondly, to the proximity of Melville Island, which is separated from it by only a narrow stretch of calm water known as Apsley Strait. The latter is barely a mile in width at its narrowest points. Numerous canoes are in use within this Strait, and occasionally, when wind and water are favourable, they venture a short distance out to sea. One type is principally in use, namely, a large bark-canoe measuring about 560 centimetres in length (*vide* Plate X, Figs. 1 and 2). It is made of a single sheet of bark, usually from suitable, straight, clear trunks of the woollybutt (*Eucalyptus miniata*) or the stringy-bark (*E. tetradonta*) (*vide* Plate XII, Fig. 1). It is cut from the tree by chopping transversely at the respective distances from the ground, then slitting it once vertically for the whole length and removing it by forcing the edge of the instrument under the bark and finally levering it off with pointed saplings. The outer side of this oblong piece of bark, which is rough, will become the inside surface of the canoe. At a distance of from 65 to 70 centimetres from either end, transverse cuts are made on the inside to a depth of half the thickness of the bark, and such thickness is removed from the whole of the surface lying away from the centre at either incision. Each end is thus reduced by half its original strength and material thereby becoming more pliable. The cutting is done with the sharp edge of a bivalve shell, usually a *Cyrena*. The subtilized ends of the sheet may, or may not, be held over a glowing fire to render them more pliant still. The sheet is folded lengthwise along its middle, and one or both ends kept together by vertical stakes, stuck in the ground and tied together at the top. The bottom corner of the fold is cut away in a very gentle upward slope. The two pieces of the fold are next held firmly together and cut in a more decisive upward direction from a point some 30 to 50 centimetres from the bottom edge end. The two freshly cut edges are neatly sewn with close, overcast stitches, and the same is done along the top horizontal edge for a distance of some 15 or 20 centimetres from the end. From the intervening space between the sewn parts at the top and bottom, an angular or curved segment is cut out in imitation of a fish-tail and its edges laced together in a like manner (*vide* Plate XI, Figs. 1 and 2). The thread used for these "run-on" stitches is in the form of strips from the split sheets of the

9:Harney & Elkin E-4, 5 (ca.1940)1943 O120 Tiwi O120

MELVILLE AND BATHURST ISLANDERS: A SHORT DESCRIPTION

By W. E. Harney and A. P. Elkin[1]

●133 *Type of Country.* These islands are fairly large, measuring together about 150 miles from east to west and about 50 miles across the widest part. It is flat country composed of lateritic overburden covering a chalky and, in some places, a green stone full of fossils (Ammonites, Belemites, etc.). At one time it was probably connected with the mainland, and the Apsley Strait which separates the two islands was in those days a continuation of the Adelaide River.

137 The timber is mostly stringybark, bloodwood, and fan palm, while along the shores is the usual jungle growth that can be found in these parts. Wallabies and 136 other game are also present, but no porcupine (echidna), native cat or emu. Dingoes 231 are plentiful. This is the reason for the natives having few dogs. The tame dog (*wongine*), while out hunting alone, is often destroyed by these dingoes, *diamini*. 825 According to the natives, the dingoes do this because they are annoyed with the native dogs for taking some of their food. They (the *diamini*) are the rightful owners and the dog is an intruder.

142 *The Natives.* The natives of these islands, all of whom speak one language, are an unusual type. Curly hair predominates, but occasionally we find a straight-304 haired and a curly haired person in the same family. The cicatrices on their bodies are of the palm leaf pattern, though the straight lines of the mainland people may 757 often be seen. They bear numerous small cuts on their foreheads and various parts of the body, caused by the practice of blood-letting as a cure for sickness.

101 *Tribal Name.* The tribal name of these people is an open question. At one time Mr. Harney called them Nimara, their word for language or talk. They have a word, Tunawini, one black man, but this term can embrace people of other tribes; it comes from the words *tiwi*, men (Hart's name for these natives, *Oceania*, Vol. I, No. 2, p. 167), *tini*, man, *tiya*, woman. They have, however, a term Worunguwe, which embraces them all—clans, horde places, people—and excludes other tribes such as Iwaidja, Larrakia, etc. The Iwaidja people call the Melville Island natives by that name, and Mr. Harney suggests that we should use it. Hart's term is not really a tribal name for it simply means people. Father McGrath suggests a name

[114] [1] Mr. W. E. Harney is the exceptional layman who understands Aboriginal culture. For a number of years he and I have been collaborating in the study of a number of Aboriginal tribes of the Northern Territory. This article is a brief summary of information gathered by Mr. Harney while engaged in work on Melville and Bathurst Islands. It has been checked, discussed with Mr. Harney, and rewritten by myself. For some parts of this paper readers are advised to refer to the following articles by C. W. M. Hart: "The Tiwi of Melville and Bathurst Islands," *Oceania*, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 167-180, and "Personal Names Amongst the Tiwi," *Oceania*, Vol. I, No. 3, pp. 80-90.—A. P. Elkin.

123 Although the wind had died and the clouds given way to a clear, light blue sky, the sea still had heavy rollers. However, instead of breaking over the canoe, they gently lifted it high in the air, then let it slide down the incline. We set out as the first rays of the sun appeared over the horizon and soon began to feel revived as our clothes began to dry. We stayed fairly close to the shore, close enough so that landmarks could be easily seen. For a while we coasted by the thin white strip of sand along which we 123 had hunted for turtle eggs the afternoon before. The land in back of the beach was low swampland and all that could be seen was a 133 thin line of green foliage. But soon we approached Tubinu Point. Here the beach gave way to a jutting headland and the steep seaward cliff was a rainbow of colors where bands of ocherous clays [134] of yellow and red were separated by clear white and topped by a [137] heavy line of dark humus. Tall eucalyptus trees stood right up to the edge of the 75-foot cliff. We stayed well clear of the base, for a short but ragged, rocky reef extended out under the water.

Rounding the point, we came to a small inlet edged with the 123 ever-present tangle of mangrove trees, beyond which was another clean white stretch of sandy beach. About this time the puppy grew restless and started roaming the canoe from stern to bow. Once he had reached the bow he climbed up to the very point and stuck his nose into the wind. As the canoe rose and dipped he would lose his balance and I would grab him and hand him to Agnes. But he would not stay put and soon would again be a live figurehead pointing the way. Finally, Albert said, "Let him go." As was to be expected, the next roller knocked little Tchuwiunga off his perch and into the sea he went. As the canoe passed, Albert leaned over and fished the frightened, struggling puppy out of the water and handed him to Agnes, who began rubbing him down. "Him gotta learn," remarked Albert. "Sea bin teach him more better." Soon Tchuwiunga revived his courage and again ventured forward, but this time instead of standing on the bow, he curled up on the bag of flour and slept soundly until we reached our destination. He had indeed learned his lesson well.

The rolling motion, sun, and inactivity had made both Agnes and me drowsy and we were all but asleep when Big Jack woke [201] us with, "Black Joe mob. Him camp Anderaningo." I looked in

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 OI20 Tiwi OI20

●133

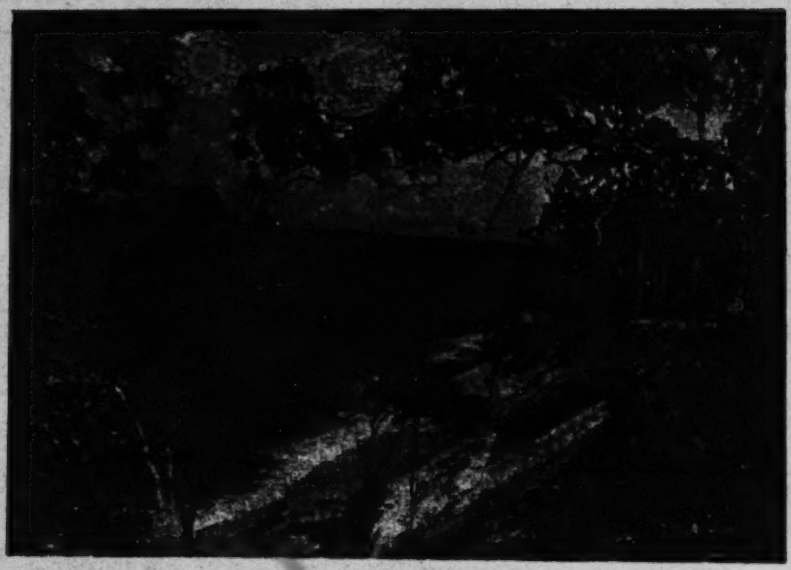

Fig. 2. Melville Island Coast

123 the direction to which he pointed with his chin, but could see nothing [201] other than white sand broken in spots with the heavy green of the mangrove jungles. "There," he repeated. "See. Him make big smoke." By straining my eyes and imagination I believed I could see a tiny wisp of white smoke rising above the last patch of green on the furthest point of land.

Distances were deceiving, for the point of land which seemed so many miles away was soon reached. The entrance to the Paluwiunga River was a narrow channel cut through the far edge of a broad sandbank. Rather than circumnavigate the bank, the men decided to go over it, but as the waves breaking over the sand were churned into a tangle of white water by the opposing river current, it was deemed advisable that all surplus passengers disembark. Agnes, clutching the puppy, and I, with my KLM bag, jumped overboard into shoulder-high water and slowly made our way over the bank to the shore. The men also went overboard and, with one on each side, they guided the canoe safely to the quiet water of the river.

123 ping the axe with his teeth, he ran up the sapling on all fours with
222 as much agility as a monkey. Upon reaching the crotch, he put his
481 arms around the trunk, placed the soles of his feet close together against the bark, and quickly progressed in a sort of leaping motion up to the top of the tree. Once there he casually climbed up, over, and around the various branches, until he reached the object of his climb, the hollow branch with the little hole through which was passing a steady stream of small insects. This branch was quickly cut through and fell crashing to the ground. Soon Albert was down again, investigating this find with Agnes and me. The hole was enlarged and the combs of dark honey exposed, still crawling with the little black bees. We dug in with our fingers or [133] brushes made by chewing small twigs, quite unmindful of the bees, who obligingly never developed stings in this part of the world. [262 237] The honey was dark and very strong, but when mixed with the dry, crumbly, yellow "bee bread" a nice balance of taste was obtained. It took the three of us very little time to finish the sugar-bag and off we went—this time in a homeward direction.

123 224 [777] The one possum looked very small and Albert again began muttering about "someone *mobnditi* make me bad luck." We separated again and when almost to the creek Agnes suddenly held me back and cautioned silence. Carefully she picked up a stout stick from the ground and then approached what I suddenly noticed was a very fat goana, about two feet long, apparently sound asleep on a nearby tree trunk. One quick blow and the lizard fell to the ground, quite dead. We carried the catch to the landing and quickly had another swim before Albert caught up. We were gathering firewood when Albert arrived and explained his delay by holding up another 123 possum. The second possum was immediately gutted, then both 252 were laid on the fire and turned frequently until all the fur had been burned off and the skin made brittle. The animals were quartered and laid again on the fire until well roasted. The goana received no preliminary treatment before going on the fire. When all were [264] cooked, they were removed and laid on a "table" of clean, green leaves, and we reached in and tore off pieces of the steaming, juicy 123 meat. It is impossible to describe this meat to someone who has not 262 tasted it. All I can say is that it was tender and tasty and perfectly

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 0120 Tiwi 0120

123
equally entertaining as she sang some risqué love songs she had 533
picked up around camp.

The evening's goose hunt was even more unsuccessful than the 123
earlier hunts. Two of the men separated and went down river and
killed three geese, but the others, upstream in the usual place, did 223
not even see any, and there was more talk of *mobudities* by everyone
way into the night.

The following day was the last and, as the Assistant Super- 123
intendent was due that evening, feverish work was done by one 648
and all on the long neglected house. Evidently the arrival of Paul
scared off the ghosts, for that evening we almost had a goose per
person, and my final memory of Minianapi is one of flickering fires
in the moonlight and the smell of fresh roasted goose carried on
the gentle breezes.

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Fig. 21. After the return trip the launch's motor gets a much needed overhaul.

13:Barclay J-3 (ca. 1939)1939 OI20 Tiwi OI20

out from East Point, and from the nearest island of the Vernon group, were also clearly visible as we passed over them. Straight ahead, Melville and Bathurst Islands now showed up, the hills a darker blue, and every moment they became more and more distinctly visible.

We turned west again as we reached the shores of Melville Island. Below, and near at hand, in turn were sandy beaches, cliffs that come straight down to the water's edge, or low mangrove-flats through which wind serpentine inlets of salt water. Inland, low green hills are covered with open tropical forest, denser on the lower slopes and thinning towards the arid, stony summits. Fan-palms grow among the tropical eucalypts, and the familiar pandanus palm borders open grassy flats just as it does on the mainland across the narrow seas. Buffalo, now so much reduced in numbers that nobody shoots them, feed on the flats, and in the forest-covered hills are many kangaroos and wallabies. Little bays, and now and then projecting lines of reef, make natural boat-harbours, and far away across the tree-tops a wide expanse of shining water seems to be a great lake surrounded by wooded hills—it is actually an arm of the sea on the eastern side of Cape Van Diemen.

The funnel-shaped entrance to Apsley Strait, the mile-wide, fifty-mile-long stretch of fast-flowing waterway that separates the two islands, soon appeared beneath us. Looking towards the north, on the eastern side of this narrow silvery passage, one sees the wooded hills, the dense patches of vivid green jungle, and the open swampy plains of Melville Island. To the west, on the Bathurst Island side of the entrance, dense plantations of coco-nut palms occupy the foreground. There are cleared fields with a wall of forest beside them, white roofs among the palms, and beyond again are thickly-timbered heights.

DENSE mangroves, of a deeper green than that of forest or jungle foliage, give contrast at the water's edge on either side of the narrow strait, which, a silver streak in the blue distance, leads on to the sea, faintly visible far beyond at the height at which we were flying. The tide runs through this strait like a mill-race; but at the moment it was dead-water, and, with sail set, a large dug-out canoe was making across from Melville to Bathurst Island. As the 'plane banked round preparatory to landing, I saw, beyond the canoe and across the strait, the iron roof of the only European dwelling on Melville Island.

It was formerly the permanent camp of Joe Cooper, a famous buffalo-hunter; but, now, since Cooper's death, even this solitary outpost has long been deserted. It is more than a century since the old military settlement of Fort Dundas, at the northern end of Apsley Strait, was abandoned. Nothing of the fort now remains except a few heaps of stone, and, buried in thick scrub, the grass-grown brickwork that faced the surrounding deep trench. The area of Melville Island is 2,240 square miles. Bathurst Island is only half as large. Although Melville Island may, some day, come within the scope of North Australian settlement schemes, the major part of Bathurst Island is vested in perpetuity in the authorities of the Mission of the Sacred Heart, and the latter island will remain, fortunately almost entirely in its virgin state, a sanctuary alike for man and beast.

We taxied to a standstill on the well-kept landing-ground of the Sacred Heart Mission in the presence of many spectators. Notified of the time of our arrival by means of the wireless

[p. 14(A)]

13:Barclay J-3 (ca. 1939)1939 O120 Tiwi O120

411 grass, in the foreground, so that the whirling club slithers on in an unforeseen and most unpleasant manner. It may rise as high as a man's head, or it may strike him on the shins.

● 133
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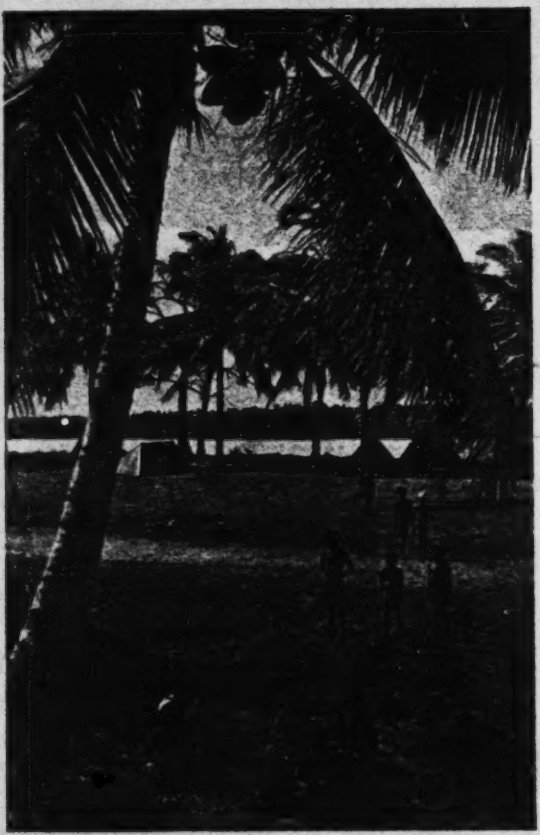

NATIVE "HOUSES" UNDER THE COCO-NUT PALMS AT BATHURST ISLAND MISSION.

726 Sometimes, as in the days of chivalry when English and French knights rode out before the main battle, eight men will advance to fight eight men of the other side, one pair at a time, each warrior throwing his spears and clubs in turn. Sentries are then posted to one side, before and behind the combatants. As a warrior with a stock of pidgin English put it, "That feller, him look out front side. That feller, him look out back side."

[198]

At times warriors arrive by canoe to fight a duel on the beach close to the mission station. These are frequently more serious combats, and then men who are camped under the palms chase the duellists off; but these always land later further down, and fight it out in the long run. Just before my visit, there had been fought the only naval battle in the history of the islands. The encounter took place in the mouth of Apsley Strait to the accompaniment of excited yells as canoes overturned when warriors stopped unevenly in dodging the flying spears. Nobody

[p. 17(B)]